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Jihad warns U.S. about 7 still captive

By Farouk Nassar
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BEIRUT — Shiite extremists said yesterday that seven kidnapped Americans being held in Lebanon "will face a black fate" if the United States retaliated against Lebanon for the TWA hijack-hostage incident.

Islamic Jihad (Islamic Holy War), a radical Shiite group responsible for the suicide truck-bomb attack on U.S. Marine headquarters in 1983 and other bombings of U.S. targets, had said Tuesday that its "lovers of martyrdom" were prepared for new strikes against the United States.

It issued another statement yesterday, saying, "We wish to emphasize to the American administration and its president, clown Ronald Reagan, that it will shoulder the full responsibility if it attempts directly or through Israel any aggression against the oppressed in Lebanon.

"For the second time, we emphasize that the seven Americans with us will face a black fate if the American administration commits any foolhardiness against our people."

The handwritten statement was delivered to News of Lebanon, a privately owned news agency, and two privately owned Lebanese radio stations.

The seven Americans, the first of whom was kidnapped in March 1984, are William Buckley, 56, a U.S. Embassy political officer; the Rev. Benjamin Weir, 60, a Presbyterian minister; Peter Kilburn, 60, a librarian at the American University of Beirut; the Rev. Lawrence Jenco, 50, a Roman Catholic priest; Terry Anderson, 37, chief Middle East correspondent of the Associated Press; David Jacobsen, 54, director of the American University Hospital, and Thomas Sutherland, 53, dean of agriculture at the university.

President Reagan had demanded that the seven be included in the release of the TWA hostages, but Nabih Berri, the leader of the Shiite militia Amal who handled the negotiations, said he did not know where they were.

Amal offered Tuesday to "do what we can" toward the release of the kidnapped Americans, but only if it received a direct request from Washington.

Berri said the Reagan administration had declared its support for Lebanon's central government and respect for its sovereignty and integrity in a statement issued a day before the 39 American hostages were freed.

But yesterday, in the wake of U.S. actions aimed at closing Beirut's airport, Berri said, "When commitments are betrayed, the door is open to wrest your rights by every possible means. What is considered terrorism by certain sides is called heroism and martyrdom by others."